

THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL COVENTRY FIRE DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem was that the Central Coventry Fire District does not have a succession plan to guide the future leadership of the fire district. The purpose of this research project was to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the Central Coventry Fire District can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were: a) What succession plan models are available?, b) What are the critical elements of the succession plan models?, c) What succession plans are other fire departments utilizing?, d) What are the critical elements of the succession plans utilized by other fire departments?, and e) What are the elements that are important to the staff of the Central Coventry Fire District to insure a successful succession plan?

The procedures involved a review of materials pertaining to succession planning, succession planning programs in general, professional development programs, leadership into the future, strategic planning, mentoring, training, competencies of fire officers and succession planning strategies. A survey was given to the staff of the Central Coventry Fire District regarding the critical elements of development of a successful succession plan.

The research project results identified succession plan models, as well as succession plans used by other fire departments, along with their critical design elements. The results did identify critical elements that can be used to develop a succession plan, which the Central Coventry Fire District leadership can use to start their development of a succession plan.

The recommendation of this research was that the Central Coventry Fire District conduct a training session for its employees to discuss the implementation of a succession plan and its benefits to the organization as a whole. It was also recommended that the leadership consider writing a strategic plan for the department as well. The final recommendation was for the fire district to develop a succession plan, and the development of the plan start immediately.

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Introduction

The problem is that the Central Coventry Fire District (CCFD) does not have a succession plan to guide the future leadership of the fire district. The purpose of this research project is to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the CCFD can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district. This is a descriptive research project. The research questions are: a) What succession plan models are available?, b) What are the critical elements of the succession plan models?, c) What succession plans are other fire departments utilizing?, d) What are the critical elements of the succession plans utilized by other fire departments?, and e) What are the elements that are important to the staff of the CCFD to insure a successful succession plan?

Background and Significance

The CCFD has only had six fire chiefs since the inception of the department in 1956. All six fire chiefs were appointed by a board of directors that had oversight authority for the CCFD. Most of the appointments were conducted through relationships between incoming fire chiefs and sitting board members. Appointment to the fire chief position was not necessarily a matter of having the skills and knowledge to perform the job. Currently, this researcher is the fire chief of the CCFD and I have accumulated many skills and much education to lead this organization in today's dynamic climate of the fire service. I achieved my success by being proactive and pushing myself to attain those things I needed to be chief. There was no program in place, either educationally or mentoring wise, to guide me into my future position of fire chief in the department. There is no blame to place here for the lack of succession planning, but over the years, the CCFD organization just did not make succession planning a high priority.

Now our organization has been faced with many challenges related to a rapidly expanding growth in the community as well as a larger firefighting workforce. These two items alone have presented many challenges to the organization which have been dealt with using a

head-on approach with successful results. It has become apparent to our organization that future fire chiefs will need the right skills and knowledge to deal with these issues in the future. Not only will the fire chief need the right skills and knowledge, but so will other department officers as today's approach to fire service issues relies upon a team approach. This team approach will be necessary for the future survival of the CCFD.

Based upon this concern of assuring appropriate skills and knowledge of future leaders, the CCFD recognizes the need for succession planning and is committed to identifying the critical elements of a succession plan so that the process of formulating one starts now, before any future change in leadership.

This Applied Research Project relates to the terminal objective for unit five, Being in Transition: Understanding Change During Midlife and Beyond, the terminal objective for unit six, Succession/Replacement Planning, the terminal objective for unit nine, Power, the terminal objective for unit 10, Networking, and the terminal objective for unit 12, Influencing Styles, of the Executive Fire Officer Program Student Manual (FEMA, 2000), for the Executive Leadership class. This research project relates to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) operational objective of *2,500 communities will have a comprehensive multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by or including the local fire service*, and USFA operational objective to *appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues* (USFA Website, 2005).

Literature Review

This researcher has reviewed pertinent literature from various sources to identify the critical elements of a successful succession plan for the CCFD for the current leadership to use to start the process of formulating a succession plan. Five research questions need to be addressed through this literature review. First, what succession plan models are available? Second, what are the critical elements of the succession plan models? Third, what succession plans are other fire departments utilizing? Fourth, what are the critical elements of the succession plans utilized by

other fire departments? Fifth, what are the elements that are important to the staff of the CCFD to insure a successful succession plan?

Creating a business succession plan. The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) (2005) identified steps of a succession plan. They are outlined as follows.

- Determining the value of your company, its receivables, and potential debts.
- Creating the ideal scenario for your departure from the company.
- Determining the succession's tax implications and how to reduce them.
- Establishing the company's strategic vision.
- Examining the field of potential heirs, buyers and other successors.
- Determining who will coach the successor
- Deciding how roles will be shared among the heirs. (BDC, 2005, p. 1)

Developing bench strength: the importance of succession planning. In Reenie Kelleher's (2004) article, she explains that succession planning revolves around evaluating what the organization's leadership and talent needs are going to be in the future. This includes identifying individuals who can potentially satisfy those needs and preparing them as future leaders for their eventual roles. She (Kelleher, 2004) identifies the need to survey current leaders to identify which skills are most important to the organization, and in which roles those skills should be found. Leadership coaching and/or mentoring is the most effective approach to helping future leaders develop the most important skills according to her article.

Follow the leader. Johnson (2004) discusses how succession planning may be difficult for an organization where transition often meets with resistance. However, he emphasizes the need for candidates that embrace change and can direct change. He reduces successful succession planning into four steps.

- 1) Identify existing competencies relating to leadership needs as well as to the needs of your department and the community it serves.
- 2) Evaluate members of your department and how they fit with the mission, vision and core values of your organization.
- 3) Implement coaching, mentoring, recruitment and training requirements that are consistent with the department's operational needs and its mission, vision and values.
- 4) Develop a plan. (Johnson, 2004, p. 137)

Johnson (2004) further stresses that the leaders of an organization must build a culture of trust through responsibility. These leaders must push decision-making down through the chain of command in order to make tomorrow's leaders. A culture where employees are not afraid to take risks and make decisions is important to effective succession planning.

Incorporating succession planning into your organization. Patrick Ibarra (2004) identified in his paper the importance of succession planning and its ability to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization. He identified three types of succession planning:

- 1) Simple Replacement planning - a process that indicates possible internal replacements for critical positions.
- 2) Developmental succession planning – a process that indicates not only possible internal replacements for critical positions but also provides for developing individuals to meet the challenge of future organizational change by grooming them for advancement possibilities and for exercising increasing technical proficiency.
- 3) Talent pool planning – a process that indicates a group of possible internal replacements for critical positions and also provides for developing groups of people to meet the challenge of future organizational change. (Ibarra, 2004, P. 4)

Ibarra (2004) identifies what he calls a four-phase approach to effectively instituting a successful succession plan. The four-phase approach is to first establish the scope of the succession plan by reviewing the organization's strategic plan; second, create a succession plan that meets your workforce strategies; third, implement the succession plan through appropriate tactics and strategies; and fourth, monitor, evaluate and revise the succession plan through lessons learned.

There are several critical aspects that he identifies as necessary for succession planning to be effective in your organization:

- A commitment by the City/County Manager and senior managers, and alignment with organizational strategy.
- Fully utilizing the Four-Phase Approach
- Competency models that provide a blueprint for high-performers now.
- A functioning performance management system that measures individuals against the competency models.
- Assessment methods that measure how well-prepared individuals are to assume additional, or specialized, responsibility.
- An individual development planning process that helps to narrow the present gap between current competencies and current performance and the future gap between future competencies needed and potential; and
- A measurement method that assesses how well the succession program is functioning over time. (Ibarra, 2004, P. 6)

Kitchener fire department master community plan. The Kitchner Fire Department (KFD) (KFD, 2004) has identified the need for succession planning in their master community plan. The

KFD has set succession planning as an important goal for their department to implement. The KFD statement concerning succession planning is as follows:

The Kitchener Fire Department shall provide personnel with career planning and educational opportunities to assist staff in the preparation of career advancement. The Kitchener Fire Department clearly understands the need to prepare staff for the future and to invest into their development. By developing a career roadmap the Department will raise the level of professionalism and enhance personal development through a defined process. The KPFFA Collective Agreement defines the requirements of new personnel to graduate through the increment system and the eligibility and evaluation process for officer level advancement. However, there is a need for an enhanced process which guides our members throughout their career and makes them aware of educational requirements, training, and assignments that will prepare them for promotion. A Succession and Career Plan would define opportunities designed to assist interested staff to develop the capabilities, knowledge and skills to effectively meet the demands of an Officer/Supervisor. (KFD, 2004, p. 6)

The KFD has set the following strategic direction to guide their succession planning process:

1. Operational Procedures shall continue to be developed to provide staff at all levels with the appropriate operational, administrative, and behavior guidance.
2. Officer/supervisor Development and Leadership opportunities shall be established to assist staff in their quest for advancement. Program(s) will cover a wide range of topics including leadership and management practices, Incident Command and Operational best practices, and self directed components.

4. Make staff aware and continue to provide access to existing education programs such as the Corporate Training and Education Development (TED), Ontario Fire College Courses, etc.
3. Opportunities may be provided for staff to be temporarily assigned to other divisions within the Department.
4. Drill based performance measurement scenarios shall be developed to assist staff in development of individual, crew, and platoon capabilities and will provide a mechanism of evaluation of individual and team abilities.
5. Mentoring programs and performance evaluation systems shall be provided at all ranks for those who are interested and request it. (KFD, 2004, p. 6)

Lead the way to your future leaders. In his article, James Morris-Lee (2001) identified the signs of a successor. He stressed that a successor must be a problem analyzer; a creative thinker; have the ability to exercise good judgement; have the drive to get things done; be resilient when dealing with a crises; have empathy for others; be a leader in bringing new possibilities to the organization; be a developer, moving things along until they become reality; be a good manger to direct the affairs of the organization; be speculative to determine sound new realities; be piloting for early application of new realities under controlled conditions; be testing so that fact-finding is second nature; be a mentor to teach and train; be a facilitator that empowers others to do their job; and be a supervisor promoting results through oversight and caretaking (Morris-Lee, 2001).

Next in line: five steps for successful succession planning. In his article, Andre Mamprin (2002) identifies a five-point plan for effective transitions. First is to build a solid foundation to assure growth of the association. Second is to develop the leader's exit strategy keeping in mind that a sound successful strategy begins with a goal or a vision of the desired outcome. Third is to minimize the organization's risk. The risk-related element is critical to assure that if an illness, injury, disability or death occurs to key leaders, the organization will still survive. This could be

in the form of special agreements, business plans and insurance policies. Fourth is the organizations capability to strengthen systems and processes. This can be accomplished by:

- Building the successor's business and leadership skills
- Planning the development and retention of key persons
- Creating an effective association structure
- Developing management systems for peak association performance
- Documenting systems and procedures to create efficiencies and support the effective transfer of knowledge
- Implementing a proper strategic planning process that includes leadership transition
- Hiring and training the best possible staff
- Having accounting and financial controls and a comprehensive marketing plan

(Mamprin, 2002, p. 4)

Finally, the fifth point is transitioning the leadership so that the gaps are identified between the required leadership and the existing talent pool.

Pasadena fire department strategic plan 2005-2010. The Pasadena Fire Department (PFD) (PFD, 2005) has identified the need for succession planning in their strategic plan. The succession plan of the PFD is as follows:

For the Department to be the most successful, it must always be prepared to replace members within its rank structure. Good succession planning will help minimize this impact. (PFD, p. 16)

The following steps have been identified for succession planning:

- Refine recurring schedules for all promotional exams;
- Aggressively anticipate vacancies and attempt to always have a current list of eligible individuals available;

- Where possible, select replacements in advance of vacancies;
- Aggressively train personnel so that they are ready to assume positions when vacancies occur; and,
- Where possible, identify the maximum tenure of specialty assignments. (PFD, 2005, p. 16)

Professional development and training plan, city of Minneapolis fire department. In his article, Deputy Chief James Clack (2002) identified the importance of succession planning and how it fits the fire department's professional development plan. As part of this succession planning through the ranks, Deputy Chief Clack outlines the strategy to prepare fire department personnel for future management positions and the retention of quality employees. The first strategy is training where the department is instituting credit-based firefighter training programs for both new and existing employees. The new employee, or cadet firefighter, will receive minimum basic training of Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Emergency Medical Technician, Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational, Hazardous Materials Technician, Confined Space Training, and High Angle Rope Rescue.

The second strategy of the Minneapolis Fire Department is to institute competency based training for all officer positions in the department. This starts with a Fire Motor Operator qualifications, Fire Captain qualifications, Battalion or District Chief qualifications, Deputy Chief qualifications, Assistant Chief qualifications and Fire Chief qualifications. It should also be emphasized here that all levels of officer from fire captain and up are encouraged to attend National Fire Academy programs to further their education (Clack, 2002).

Salinas fire department. The City of Salinas Fire Department (SFD) (2005) has identified the need for succession planning since they have an anticipated retirement of 24 firefighters in one year. The SFD identified the first step to be the implementation of a Battalion Chief

promotional exam. Such an exam was conducted and some upward movement occurred. The remaining candidates were assigned several projects each so that they have to work side-by-side with the current administrative staff. This will help those candidates in preparation for future promotions. The goal right along is to provide a smooth management transition (SFD, 2005).

Succession planning. In her article, Nicole Ross (2002) identified mitigation measures, the aftermath, and expert advice. Mitigation measures she advises that an organization compose a list of positions that require successors; establish an evaluation process for all potential succession candidates; determine how positions without likely successors will be filled; and have in place an adequate crisis communication plan in case of a key executive's sudden departure so that continuity of operations may be maintained (Ross, 2002).

Ross (2002) also identifies that in the aftermath of appointing a successor, that he/she is performing adequately in the new position and that the succession plan be updated.

Finally, Ross suggests the use of expert advice to train all department heads in media training so that they are capable of dealing with the press; a communications plan with a predetermined press release for the media; all key players should know their responsibilities in the organization and how to contact all members of the organization; and consider the use of a town meeting in the event of a successor change so that questions and answers can take place in order to calm employee fears (Ross, 2002).

Succession planning. Workforce planning for Wisconsin State Government (Wisconsin, 2005) identified what a succession plan does and why it is needed. The points made are:

- Ensures that employees are prepared and trained for the job and responsibilities of the future.
- Provides growth opportunities that help motivate and retain current employees. It shifts the idea from job progression to job expansion.

- Allows for the transfer of knowledge from key people in the organization to their successors using techniques such as mentoring and on-the-job training.
- Reduces stress on the new incumbent by making him/her better prepared to fill the role.
- Reduces workload of other team members who normally would have to pick up duties until the new incumbent is up-to-speed.
- Reduces the manager's time spent in assisting the new incumbent in becoming proficient.
- With the ever-changing workforce, succession plans are needed to survive in today's global environment. (Wisconsin, 2005, p. 1)

Succession planning. Zimmerman (2001) in her presentation defines succession planning as getting the right number of people with the right skills, experiences, and competencies in the right jobs at the right time. She goes on to identify how succession planning helps organizations.

- Engages senior management in a disciplined review of organizational talent
- Guides development activities of staff
- Brings HR systems into alignment
- Assures continuity of key positions / Avoids transition problems
- Assures new managers are prepared for their jobs
- Focus on Organizational Effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 9)

According to Zimmerman (2001), the succession plan should provide:

1. Workforce analysis and forecasting
2. Communications strategy
3. ID positions targeted for growth and attrition
4. ID current and future competencies

5. ID and assess high potential employees
6. Conduct competency gap analysis
7. Establish recruitment strategy and assessment / selection tools
8. Institute formal coaching and mentoring (training and development)
9. Select for positions
10. Establish a retention plan
11. Evaluation / Measurement (Zimmerman, 2001, pp. 11-12)

Succession planning: an idea whose time has come. In his article, Patrick Ibarra (2005) discusses the effectiveness and proper implementation of succession planning. He stresses that organizational leaders:

- Need the excellent performance in their organizations preserved, if not enhanced.
- Need important leadership positions identified.
- Want to strengthen individual advancement.
- Want to have the right leaders prepared for the right positions at the needed time.

(Ibarra, 2005, p. 19)

Ibarra defines an eight step succession planning project plan. 1) Assess future service needs by utilizing a strategic plan that sets future priorities. 2) Identify critical positions and high-potential employees that are essential for the organization at all levels from upper management to smaller work groups. 3) Identify competencies for organizational positions such as decision-making, initiating action, managing conflict and coaching skills. 4) Do a complete gap analysis to determine the existence or extent of a gap in the competencies for each position. 5) Select training and development activities to close the gaps in competencies. This will lead to better employee development. 6) Conduct management training focused on augmenting their skills and knowledge necessary to develop the talent of their people reporting to them. 7)

Implement development strategies and tactics that will communicate the succession plan to all employees. 8) Monitor and evaluate the succession plan so that it may be revised as needed to ensure its success (Ibarra, 2005, pp. 20-22).

Succession planning demystified. Hirsh (2000) in his study identified typical activities covered by succession planning.

- Identifying possible successors
- Challenging and enriching succession plans through discussion of people and posts
- Agreeing job (or job group) successors and development plans for individuals
- Analysis of the gaps or surpluses revealed by the planning process
- Review, ie., checking the actual pattern of job filling and whether planned individual development has taken place. (Hirsh, 2000, p. 2)

Hirsh (2000) emphasizes that succession planning has come a long way and requires some adaptations for an organization to implement such plans. Adaptations may be:

- Strong emphasis on using succession planning as a process for pro-actively developing “talent”, and therefore an emphasis on engineering developmental work experiences.
- Planning for “pools” of jobs where possible, not just for individual posts.
- Acceptance of the need for a more diverse senior management group, with functional strength as well as general management skills.
- Consideration of future skill needs as well as current skills.
- More objective information on the performance, skills and potential of individuals.
- A collective management process for identifying successors and taking responsibility for their development. (Hirsh, 2000, p. 4)

Succession planning: it's not just for your executive team. In his article, Adam Miller (2005) discusses the use of succession planning to attract and keep talented people. He identifies several important items such as collection of employee data including career history and skills; automated management of corporate wide succession plans based on that data; accurate development plans to enhance employee skills through ongoing training initiatives; detailed skill assessment for specific teams; and a robust internal recruiting operation that takes into account the distinct skills of its own workforce (Miller, 2005).

Miller identifies core features for an effective succession plan.

- Career profiling tools – capture the skills and experiences of the workforce, and create an online resume of sorts, which allow managers to search individual skill profiles to fill critical workforce openings. Information to track includes:
 - Education
 - Licenses
 - Certifications
 - Awards
 - Previous roles or experiences
 - Additional training, skills, or positions. (Miller, 2005, p. 3)
- Team building tools – provide cost-effective identification of project team candidates, allowing you to efficiently leverage the disparate skill sets of your workforce. Team building tools include:
 - Skills
 - Functional requirements
 - Roles
 - Previous positions
 - Licenses

- Education. (Miller, 2005, p. 3)
- Talent management plans – allow organizations to closely manage their workforce to quickly identify high-potential employees and their skills. Talent management planning tools should:
 - Identify business and people priorities
 - Map employees on a graphical grid in order to see varying degrees of performance and potential
 - Provide a view of the current organizational structure, as well as plan the future organizational structure
 - Identify future open positions based on the future organizational structure
 - Generate talent management plans and succession plans based on employee competency assessments as well as career profiles. (Miller, 2005, p. 4)

Succession planning: putting an organization's knowledge to work. In their article, Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identify succession planning as an ongoing, dynamic process that aligns business goals with human capital needs. Their main objective of their article is to recognize the need for succession planning. They point out that succession planning addresses the needs of an organization as senior management ages; succession planning helps an organization prepare for an unexpected event such as an illness or sudden death; and finally a succession plan ensures that an organization has the right personnel to function at peak efficiency.

Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identified steps that lead an organization through the design, development and implementation of a succession plan. The steps are an organization must identify its existing competencies; the organization must evaluate and assess current employees to determine how they match up to the organizational needs; the organization must introduce coaching, mentoring, training and recruiting methods that match the future needs of the organization; and the organization must develop the actual plan.

The best way to develop qualified, competent fire officers in the Bloomfield township fire department. In his research paper, Bertucci (2002) identified recommendations for preparing competent fire officers.

1. Train fire officer candidates to the level of Fire Officer II prior to promotion so they are trained to fulfill the duties of Lieutenant as soon as they are promoted. This would also bring the department into compliance with Part 74 and reduce the future potential for liability.
2. Develop an orientation program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The program example noted in Appendix B is an example of the format that may be used.
3. Develop a mentoring program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The new officer would enter this program after promotion but prior to receiving his initial assignment. The officer should spend time on a 40-hour schedule with all staff officers, learning the roles and responsibilities of these individuals. Special attention should be given to the Fire Prevention Bureau since this area was identified in the job description analysis and the survey as areas where more training is needed. While on this schedule, the new officer should be given an assignment to complete that requires the involvement of all three units. This will help the officer to see the communication and cooperation it takes to accomplish a goal that involves integration between the staff personnel and the suppression units.
4. Develop an evaluation program for new officers wherein they would be evaluated at one month, three month, six month, and one year intervals.
5. Work with the local college or through an organization such as the Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training to develop a program that specifically addresses the skills and knowledge identified through this Applied Research Project as those that are needed by

the new fire officer to handle the administrative duties of the job. (Bertucci, 2002, pp. 28-29)

The strategy of succession planning. Dana Baldwin (2000) wrote an article identifying the strategy of implementing a successful succession plan. She (Baldwin, 2000) explains succession planning as a process of preparing for the future of your company. She identifies some elements that need to be considered or included as part of a succession plan.

- What is the long-term direction of your company? Do you have an effective strategic plan guiding your course and direction?
- What are the key areas which require continuity and development of the people resources within you company?
- Who are the key people you want to develop and nurture for the future?
- How does the concept of succession planning fit into your strategies? Are you concentrating your efforts in the areas where the returns will be highest?
- What are the career paths that your most talented people should be following? Is each path customized to fit the abilities and talents of the people involved? (Baldwin, 2000, pp. 1-2)

She (Baldwin, 2000) also identified the advantages of succession planning.

- An ongoing supply of well trained, broadly experienced, well-motivated people who are ready and able to step into key positions as needed.
- A cadre of desirable candidates who are being integrated into the company with positive goals established for them individually.
- A flow of these capable people through various departments with the goals of educating them into the culture and processes of the company.

- Alignment of the future needs of the company with the availability of appropriate resources within the company.
 - Positive goals for key personnel, which will help keep them with the company and will help assure the continuing supply of capable successors for each of the important positions included in the succession plan.
 - Defined career paths, which will help the company recruit and retain better people.
- (Baldwin, 2000, pp. 2-3)

Finally, Baldwin (2000) identifies benefits of good succession planning.

- A well-trained, involved and potentially deep stream of capable people who are well versed in the breadth and depth of the company.
- A continuous stream of people who are constantly reviewing, questioning and refining procedures and processes, helping to improve the quality inside the company, as well as improving the offerings of the company out in the market place.
- An increasing reputation as a good, challenging, stimulating place to work, which could result in your ability to hire ever better people. (Baldwin, 2000, p. 4)

Why is succession planning important? In his article, Bartridge (2005) discusses the role that succession planning plays in an organization. For any organization to have a successful succession plan, there are a number of key issues that need to be considered.

- The succession planning program must have the support and backing of the company's senior level management.
- Succession planning must be part of an integrated HR process that includes training, development and performance appraisal
- Identify what skills the organization will need in 5, 10 or 15 years

- Critical positions must be identified and included in the company's succession planning program
- Identify high-performers that are almost ready to step into those critical positions
- Analyze the workforce and identify who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years
- Managers need to identify the responsibilities, skills and competencies that will be needed by their replacements
- A system for communicating succession planning information to managers must be established
- A systematic approach for identifying, nominating and selecting potential successors must be established
- Background information on potential successors, such as education, experience, skills, appraisals and potential should be reviewed
- The training and development requirements of potential successors needs to be determined
- The skills of potential successors must be developed through work experiences, job rotation, projects and other challenging assignments
- A system for monitoring candidate's development plan progress by senior management should be established
- Succession planning must include a system for providing feedback and encouragement to potential successors
- Succession planning is basically a "numbers game" that requires good organizational skills and the ability to pay attention to details

- Finally, the succession plan must belong “to the organization” and not the HR department in order to make sure it has the attention it deserves (Bartridge, 2005, pp. 1-2)

Bartridge (2005) also points out the potential pitfalls of succession planning.

- Focusing only on the “technical competencies” and failing to consider the team-building and leadership development requirements
- Underestimating people within the organization or overlooking employees that don’t appear to fit your standard “company template”
- Implementing a program that is designed for upward mobility only – lateral succession moves should also be included in the plan
- Failing to offer the appropriate training and development opportunities
- Creating a development program that only offers generic “leadership” training programs

And the two biggest errors made regarding succession planning efforts:

- Not holding managers & leaders accountable for succession planning
- Not sharing the data with employees – you run the risk of losing promising employees if they don’t feel the company has a plan for their development (Bartridge, 2005, pp. 2-3)

Summary of the literature. The objective of this research is to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the CCFD can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district. The literature review supported the objective by identifying several critical elements that need to be part of a succession plan.

Procedures

Research Methodology

The desired outcome of this research is to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the CCFD can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district. The research project utilized descriptive research methodology to identify the critical elements.

The on-line card catalog of the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy (NFA) was used to search materials pertaining to succession planning, succession planning programs in general, professional development programs, leadership into the future, strategic planning, mentoring, training, competencies of fire officers and succession planning strategies. Further, the search engine www.Google.com was utilized also to search for materials pertaining to succession planning and other programs related to the research subject.

All periodical materials utilized in this research project were obtained from the LRC at the NFA campus.

All research information from online internet sources was obtained from computers located at the student computer lab at the NFA, and computers located at the Central Coventry fire station in Coventry, Rhode Island.

Books and reports printed by the USFA were picked up on the campus of the NFA. Or, the USFA materials were printed in their entirety from the USFA Website, which are equivalent in content to the published text distributed by USFA.

All printed reference materials utilized for this research project are listed in the references section of this research project. Each reference identifies the type of material and its origin such as a publisher, website, article, magazine, fire department literature or other organization that may have provided materials. By identifying the source of the reference material from the

reference list, one can identify where to locate the material and the location to retrieve the material as identified in the first few paragraphs of this section.

Survey

One survey was conducted for this research project.

A survey was used to gather information from the staff of the CCFD to determine the elements that are important to them in the development of a successful succession plan. The survey was given to the staff, completed by the staff, and returned to this researcher. The actual survey sheet given to the CCFD staff is shown in Appendix A. The survey sheet was designed to identify ideas that the staff could identify to be important for our department to implement in order to provide for a successful succession plan for the future of the department.

Analysis of the Survey

The survey given to the CCFD staff was completed and submitted back to this researcher for inclusion with the results of this research project.

Limitations and Assumptions

The convenience sample from the staff of CCFD represents 12 employees of the department. It is assumed that all respondents answered honestly.

Definition of Terms

Mentoring: refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner referred to as a mentee. (Wikipedia, 2006)

Succession Planning: is the process of identifying and preparing suitable personnel, through mentoring and training, to replace key players within an organization as their terms expire. (Wikipedia, 2006)

Training: refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge as it relates to specific useful skills. Today it is often referred to as professional development. (Wikipedia, 2006)

Results

Question 1: What succession plan models are available?

The literature review revealed that there are several succession plan models available to implement an effective succession plan, although there are very few succession plan models specifically designed for fire departments.

Specific findings through the literature review included:

The BDC (2005) identified steps of a succession plan. They are outlined as follows.

- Determining the value of your company, its receivables, and potential debts.
- Creating the ideal scenario for your departure from the company.
- Determining the succession's tax implications and how to reduce them.
- Establishing the company's strategic vision.
- Examining the field of potential heirs, buyers and other successors.
- Determining who will coach the successor (BDC, 2005, p. 1)

In Reenie Kelleher's (2004) article, she explains that succession planning revolves around evaluating what the organization's leadership and talent needs are going to be in the future. This includes identifying individuals who can potentially satisfy those needs and preparing them as future leaders for their eventual roles. She (Kelleher, 2004) identifies the need to survey current leaders to identify which skills are most important to the organization, and in which roles those skills should be found.

Patrick Ibarra (2004) identified in his paper the importance of succession planning and its ability to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization. He identified three types of succession planning:

- 1) Simple Replacement planning - a process that indicates possible internal replacements for critical positions.

2) Developmental succession planning – a process that indicates not only possible internal replacements for critical positions but also provides for developing individuals to meet the challenge of future organizational change by grooming them for advancement possibilities and for exercising increasing technical proficiency.

3) Talent pool planning – a process that indicates a group of possible internal replacements for critical positions and also provides for developing groups of people to meet the challenge of future organizational change. (Ibarra, 2004, P. 4)

In his article, Andre Mamprin (2002) identifies a five-point plan for effective transitions. First is to build a solid foundation to assure growth of the association. Second is to develop the leader's exit strategy keeping in mind that a sound successful strategy begins with a goal or a vision of the desired outcome. Third is to minimize the organization's risk. The risk-related element is critical to assure that if an illness, injury, disability or death occurs to key leaders, the organization will still survive. This could be in the form of special agreements, business plans and insurance policies. Fourth is the organizations capability to strengthen systems and processes.

In her article, Nicole Ross (2002) identified mitigation measures, the aftermath, and expert advice. Mitigation measures she advises that an organization compose a list of positions that require successors; establish an evaluation process for all potential succession candidates; determine how positions without likely successors will be filled; and have in place an adequate crisis communication plan in case of a key executive's sudden departure so that continuity of operations may be maintained (Ross, 2002).

Workforce planning for Wisconsin State Government (Wisconsin, 2005) identified what a succession plan does and why it is needed. The points made are:

- Ensures that employees are prepared and trained for the job and responsibilities of the future.
- Provides growth opportunities that help motivate and retain current employees. It shifts the idea from job progression to job expansion.
- Allows for the transfer of knowledge from key people in the organization to their successors using techniques such as mentoring and on-the-job training.
- Reduces stress on the new incumbent by making him/her better prepared to fill the role.
- Reduces workload of other team members who normally would have to pick up duties until the new incumbent is up-to-speed.
- Reduces the manager's time spent in assisting the new incumbent in becoming proficient.
- With the ever-changing workforce, succession plans are needed to survive in today's global environment. (Wisconsin, 2005, p. 1)

Zimmerman (2001) in her presentation defines succession planning as getting the right number of people with the right skills, experiences, and competencies in the right jobs at the right time. She goes on to identify how succession planning helps organizations. Engages senior management in a disciplined review of organizational talent

- Guides development activities of staff
- Brings HR systems into alignment
- Assures continuity of key positions / Avoids transition problems
- Assures new managers are prepared for their jobs
- Focus on Organizational Effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2001, p. 9)

In his article, Patrick Ibarra (2005) discusses the effectiveness and proper implementation of succession planning. He stresses that organizational leaders:

- Need the excellent performance in their organizations preserved, if not enhanced.
- Need important leadership positions identified.
- Want to strengthen individual advancement.
- Want to have the right leaders prepared for the right positions at the needed time.

(Ibarra, 2005, p. 19)

Hirsh (2000) in his study identified typical activities covered by succession planning.

- Identifying possible successors
- Challenging and enriching succession plans through discussion of people and posts
- Agreeing job (or job group) successors and development plans for individuals
- Analysis of the gaps or surpluses revealed by the planning process
- Review, ie., checking the actual pattern of job filling and whether planned individual development has taken place. (Hirsh, 2000, p. 2)

In his article, Adam Miller (2005) discusses the use of succession planning to attract and keep talented people. He identifies several important items such as collection of employee data including career history and skills; automated management of corporate wide succession plans based on that data; accurate development plans to enhance employee skills through ongoing training initiatives; detailed skill assessment for specific teams; and a robust internal recruiting operation that takes into account the distinct skills of its own workforce (Miller, 2005).

In their article, Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identify succession planning as an ongoing, dynamic process that aligns business goals with human capital needs. Their main objective of their article is to recognize the need for succession planning. They point out that succession planning addresses the needs of an organization as senior management ages;

succession planning helps an organization prepare for an unexpected event such as an illness or sudden death; and finally a succession plan ensures that an organization has the right personnel to function at peak efficiency.

Dana Baldwin (2000) wrote an article identifying the strategy of implementing a successful succession plan. She (Baldwin, 2000) explains succession planning as a process of preparing for the future of your company. She identifies some elements that need to be considered or included as part of a succession plan.

- What is the long-term direction of your company? Do you have an effective strategic plan guiding your course and direction?
- What are the key areas which require continuity and development of the people resources within you company?
- Who are the key people you want to develop and nurture for the future?
- How does the concept of succession planning fit into your strategies? Are you concentrating your efforts in the areas where the returns will be highest?
- What are the career paths that your most talented people should be following? Is each path customized to fit the abilities and talents of the people involved? (Baldwin, 2000, pp. 1-2)

She (Baldwin, 2000) also identified the advantages of succession planning.

- An ongoing supply of well trained, broadly experienced, well-motivated people who are ready and able to step into key positions as needed.
- A cadre of desirable candidates who are being integrated into the company with positive goals established for them individually.
- A flow of these capable people through various departments with the goals of educating them into the culture and processes of the company.

- Alignment of the future needs of the company with the availability of appropriate resources within the company.
 - Positive goals for key personnel, which will help keep them with the company and will help assure the continuing supply of capable successors for each of the important positions included in the succession plan.
 - Defined career paths, which will help the company recruit and retain better people.
- (Baldwin, 2000, pp. 2-3)

Finally, Baldwin (2000) identifies benefits of good succession planning.

- A well-trained, involved and potentially deep stream of capable people who are well versed in the breadth and depth of the company.
- A continuous stream of people who are constantly reviewing, questioning and refining procedures and processes, helping to improve the quality inside the company, as well as improving the offerings of the company out in the market place.
- An increasing reputation as a good, challenging, stimulating place to work, which could result in your ability to hire ever better people. (Baldwin, 2000, p. 4)

In his article, Bartridge (2005) discusses the role that succession planning plays in an organization. For any organization to have a successful succession plan, there are a number of key issues that need to be considered.

- The succession planning program must have the support and backing of the company's senior level management.
- Succession planning must be part of an integrated HR process that includes training, development and performance appraisal
- Identify what skills the organization will need in 5, 10 or 15 years

- Critical positions must be identified and included in the company's succession planning program
- Identify high-performers that are almost ready to step into those critical positions
- Analyze the workforce and identify who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years
- Managers need to identify the responsibilities, skills and competencies that will be needed by their replacements
- A system for communicating succession planning information to managers must be established
- A systematic approach for identifying, nominating and selecting potential successors must be established
- Background information on potential successors, such as education, experience, skills, appraisals and potential should be reviewed
- The training and development requirements of potential successors needs to be determined
- The skills of potential successors must be developed through work experiences, job rotation, projects and other challenging assignments
- A system for monitoring candidate's development plan progress by senior management should be established
- Succession planning must include a system for providing feedback and encouragement to potential successors
- Succession planning is basically a "numbers game" that requires good organizational skills and the ability to pay attention to details

- Finally, the succession plan must belong “to the organization” and not the HR department in order to make sure it has the attention it deserves (Bartridge, 2005, pp. 1-2)

Bartridge (2005) also points out the potential pitfalls of succession planning.

- Focusing only on the “technical competencies” and failing to consider the team-building and leadership development requirements
- Underestimating people within the organization or overlooking employees that don’t appear to fit your standard “company template”
- Implementing a program that is designed for upward mobility only – lateral succession moves should also be included in the plan
- Failing to offer the appropriate training and development opportunities
- Creating a development program that only offers generic “leadership” training programs

And the two biggest errors made regarding succession planning efforts:

- Not holding managers & leaders accountable for succession planning
- Not sharing the data with employees – you run the risk of losing promising employees if they don’t feel the company has a plan for their development (Bartridge, 2005, pp. 2-3)

Question 2: What are the critical elements of the succession plan models?

The literature review revealed that there are critical elements that make succession plans successful.

Specific findings through the literature review included:

In Reenie Kelleher's (2004) article leadership coaching and/or mentoring is the most effective approach to helping future leaders develop the most important skills according to her article.

Johnson (2004) discusses how succession planning may be difficult for an organization where transition often meets with resistance. However, he emphasizes the need for candidates that embrace change and can direct change. He reduces successful succession planning into four steps.

- 1) Identify existing competencies relating to leadership needs as well as to the needs of your department and the community it serves.
- 2) Evaluate members of your department and how they fit with the mission, vision and core values of your organization.
- 3) Implement coaching, mentoring, recruitment and training requirements that are consistent with the department's operational needs and its mission, vision and values.
- 4) Develop a plan. (Johnson, 2004, p. 137)

Ibarra (2004) identifies what he calls a four-phase approach to effectively instituting a successful succession plan. The four-phase approach is to first establish the scope of the succession plan by reviewing the organization's strategic plan; second, create a succession plan that meets your workforce strategies; third, implement the succession plan through appropriate tactics and strategies; and fourth, monitor, evaluate and revise the succession plan through lessons learned.

There are several critical aspects that he identifies as necessary for succession planning to be effective in your organization:

- A commitment by the City/County Manager and senior managers, and alignment with organizational strategy.

- Fully utilizing the Four-Phase Approach
- Competency models that provide a blueprint for high-performers now.
- A functioning performance management system that measures individuals against the competency models.
- Assessment methods that measure how well-prepared individuals are to assume additional, or specialized, responsibility.
- An individual development planning process that helps to narrow the present gap between current competencies and current performance and the future gap between future competencies needed and potential; and
- A measurement method that assesses how well the succession program is functioning over time. (Ibarra, 2004, P. 6)

In his article, James Morris-Lee (2001) identified the signs of a successor. He stressed that a successor must be a problem analyzer; a creative thinker; have the ability to exercise good judgement; have the drive to get things done; be resilient when dealing with a crises; have empathy for others; be a leader in bringing new possibilities to the organization; be a developer, moving things along until they become reality; be a good manger to direct the affairs of the organization; be speculative to determine sound new realities; be piloting for early application of new realities under controlled conditions; be testing so that fact-finding is second nature; be a mentor to teach and train; be a facilitator that empowers others to do their job; and be a supervisor promoting results through oversight and caretaking (Morris-Lee, 2001).

This can be accomplished by:

- Building the successor's business and leadership skills
- Planning the development and retention of key persons
- Creating an effective association structure

- Developing management systems for peak association performance
- Documenting systems and procedures to create efficiencies and support the effective transfer of knowledge
- Implementing a proper strategic planning process that includes leadership transition
- Hiring and training the best possible staff
- Having accounting and financial controls and a comprehensive marketing plan

(Mamprin, 2002, p. 4)

Ross (2002) suggests the use of expert advice to train all department heads in media training so that they are capable of dealing with the press; a communications plan with a predetermined press release for the media; all key players should know their responsibilities in the organization and how to contact all members of the organization; and consider the use of a town meeting in the event of a successor change so that questions and answers can take place in order to calm employee fears.

According to Zimmerman (2001), the succession plan should provide:

1. Workforce analysis and forecasting
2. Communications strategy
3. ID positions targeted for growth and attrition
4. ID current and future competencies
5. ID and assess high potential employees
6. Conduct competency gap analysis
7. Establish recruitment strategy and assessment / selection tools
8. Institute formal coaching and mentoring (training and development)
9. Select for positions
10. Establish a retention plan

11. Evaluation / Measurement (Zimmerman, 2001, pp. 11-12)

Ibarra defines an eight step succession planning project plan. 1) Assess future service needs by utilizing a strategic plan that sets future priorities. 2) Identify critical positions and high-potential employees that are essential for the organization at all levels from upper management to smaller work groups. 3) Identify competencies for organizational positions such as decision-making, initiating action, managing conflict and coaching skills. 4) Do a complete gap analysis to determine the existence or extent of a gap in the competencies for each position. 5) Select training and development activities to close the gaps in competencies. This will lead to better employee development. 6) Conduct management training focused on augmenting their skills and knowledge necessary to develop the talent of their people reporting to them. 7) Implement development strategies and tactics that will communicate the succession plan to all employees. 8) Monitor and evaluate the succession plan so that it may be revised as needed to ensure its success (Ibarra, 2005, pp. 20-22).

Hirsh (2000) emphasizes that succession planning has come a long way and requires some adaptations for an organization to implement such plans. Adaptations may be:

- Strong emphasis on using succession planning as a process for pro-actively developing “talent”, and therefore an emphasis on engineering developmental work experiences.
- Planning for “pools” of jobs where possible, not just for individual posts.
- Acceptance of the need for a more diverse senior management group, with functional strength as well as general management skills.
- Consideration of future skill needs as well as current skills.
- More objective information on the performance, skills and potential of individuals.

- A collective management process for identifying successors and taking responsibility for their development. (Hirsh, 2000, p. 4)

Miller identifies core features for an effective succession plan.

- Career profiling tools – capture the skills and experiences of the workforce, and create an online resume of sorts, which allow managers to search individual skill profiles to fill critical workforce openings. Information to track includes:
 - Education
 - Licenses
 - Certifications
 - Awards
 - Previous roles or experiences
 - Additional training, skills, or positions. (Miller, 2005, p. 3)
- Team building tools – provide cost-effective identification of project team candidates, allowing you to efficiently leverage the disparate skill sets of your workforce. Team building tools include:
 - Skills
 - Functional requirements
 - Roles
 - Previous positions
 - Licenses
 - Education. (Miller, 2005, p. 3)
- Talent management plans – allow organizations to closely manage their workforce to quickly identify high-potential employees and their skills. Talent management planning tools should:

- Identify business and people priorities
- Map employees on a graphical grid in order to see varying degrees of performance and potential
- Provide a view of the current organizational structure, as well as plan the future organizational structure
- Identify future open positions based on the future organizational structure
- Generate talent management plans and succession plans based on employee competency assessments as well as career profiles. (Miller, 2005, p. 4)

Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identified steps that lead an organization through the design, development and implementation of a succession plan. The steps are an organization must identify its existing competencies; the organization must evaluate and assess current employees to determine how they match up to the organizational needs; the organization must introduce coaching, mentoring, training and recruiting methods that match the future needs of the organization; and the organization must develop the actual plan.

Question 3: What succession plans are other fire departments utilizing?

The literature review revealed some succession plans being utilized by fire departments.

Specific findings through the literature review included:

The KFD (2004) has identified the need for succession planning in their master community plan. The KFD has set succession planning as an important goal for their department to implement. The KFD statement concerning succession planning is as follows:

The Kitchener Fire Department shall provide personnel with career planning and educational opportunities to assist staff in the preparation of career advancement. The Kitchener Fire Department clearly understands the need to prepare staff for the future and to invest into their development. By developing a career roadmap the Department will raise the level of professionalism and enhance personal development through a defined

process. The KPFFA Collective Agreement defines the requirements of new personnel to graduate through the increment system and the eligibility and evaluation process for officer level advancement. However, there is a need for an enhanced process which guides our members throughout their career and makes them aware of educational requirements, training, and assignments that will prepare them for promotion. A Succession and Career Plan would define opportunities designed to assist interested staff to develop the capabilities, knowledge and skills to effectively meet the demands of an Officer/Supervisor. (KFD, 2004, p. 6)

The PFD (2005) has identified the need for succession planning in their strategic plan.

The succession plan of the PFD is as follows:

For the Department to be the most successful, it must always be prepared to replace members within its rank structure. Good succession planning will help minimize this impact. (PFD, p. 16)

In his article, Clack (2002) identified the importance of succession planning and how it fits the fire department's professional development plan. As part of this succession planning through the ranks, Clack outlines the strategy to prepare fire department personnel for future management positions and the retention of quality employees. The first strategy is training where the department is instituting credit-based firefighter training programs for both new and existing employees. The new employee, or cadet firefighter, will receive minimum basic training of Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Emergency Medical Technician, Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational, Hazardous Materials Technician, Confined Space Training, and High Angle Rope Rescue.

The second strategy of the Minneapolis Fire Department is to institute competency based training for all officer positions in the department. This starts with a Fire Motor Operator qualifications, Fire Captain qualifications, Battalion or District Chief qualifications, Deputy

Chief qualifications, Assistant Chief qualifications and Fire Chief qualifications. It should also be emphasized here that all levels of officer from fire captain and up are encouraged to attend National Fire Academy programs to further their education (Clack, 2002).

The SFD (2005) has identified the need for succession planning since they have an anticipated retirement of 24 firefighters in one year. The SFD identified the first step to be the implementation of a Battalion Chief promotional exam. Such an exam was conducted and some upward movement occurred. The remaining candidates were assigned several projects each so that they have to work side-by-side with the current administrative staff. This will help those candidates in preparation for future promotions. The goal right along is to provide a smooth management transition (SFD, 2005).

Question 4: What are the critical elements of the succession plans utilized by other fire departments?

The literature review revealed that there are critical elements that make the succession plans of the identified fire departments successful within their organization.

Specific findings through the literature review included:

The KFD has set the following strategic direction to guide their succession planning process:

1. Operational Procedures shall continue to be developed to provide staff at all levels with the appropriate operational, administrative, and behavior guidance.
2. Officer/supervisor Development and Leadership opportunities shall be established to assist staff in their quest for advancement. Program(s) will cover a wide range of topics including leadership and management practices, Incident Command and Operational best practices, and self directed components.
3. Opportunities may be provided for staff to be temporarily assigned to other divisions within the Department.

4. Drill based performance measurement scenarios shall be developed to assist staff in development of individual, crew, and platoon capabilities and will provide a mechanism of evaluation of individual and team abilities.

5. Mentoring programs and performance evaluation systems shall be provided at all ranks for those who are interested and request it. (KFD, 2004, p. 6)

In his research paper, Bertucci (2002) identified recommendations for preparing competent fire officers.

1. Train fire officer candidates to the level of Fire Officer II prior to promotion so they are trained to fulfill the duties of Lieutenant as soon as they are promoted. This would also bring the department into compliance with Part 74 and reduce the future potential for liability.

2. Develop an orientation program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The program example noted in Appendix B is an example of the format that may be used.

3. Develop a mentoring program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The new officer would enter this program after promotion but prior to receiving his initial assignment. The officer should spend time on a 40-hour schedule with all staff officers, learning the roles and responsibilities of these individuals. Special attention should be given to the Fire Prevention Bureau since this area was identified in the job description analysis and the survey as areas where more training is needed. While on this schedule, the new officer should be given an assignment to complete that requires the involvement of all three units. This will help the officer to see the communication and cooperation it takes to accomplish a goal that involves integration between the staff personnel and the suppression units.

4. Develop an evaluation program for new officers wherein they would be evaluated at one month, three month, six month, and one year intervals.
5. Work with the local college or through an organization such as the Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training to develop a program that specifically addresses the skills and knowledge identified through this Applied Research Project as those that are needed by the new fire officer to handle the administrative duties of the job. (Bertucci, 2002, pp. 28-29)

Question 5: What are the elements that are important to the staff of the CCFD to insure a successful succession plan?

The survey completed by the CCFD staff provided the results for this question.

The request posed to the staff was: considering the definition and explanation of succession planning, please list ideas that you feel would be important for our fire department to implement in order to provide for a successful succession plan for the future of our department.

The results of the survey were:

- Establish a mentoring program where senior officers have subordinates assigned to them to assist in learning leadership roles.
- Provide on-going training for all personnel in officer level training. Many of our personnel are regularly put into situations that require them to act in the officer's role.
- Encourage involvement in professional trade organizations at all levels. Fire Marshals to become active in RIFMA, instructors in RIFIA, officers in RIAFC, NEIAFC....
- Encourage exposure to other departments and ways of doing things such as through attendance at trainings held regionally.
- Encourage those with special administrative talents to share and utilize those talents.

- Establish a merit system with the capability of some type of reward for furthering the goals of the department by utilizing any innovative approach to problem solving.
- Survey each department member regarding the areas that they personally feel that they need mentoring and/or education in so these needs may be met.
- Allow less experienced personnel take the lead, decision making roles in less critical incidents, with supervision, to allow them the experience and confidence to run an incident so that when they may be in that position on their own, they will be able to handle it.
- Allowing members to be trained and participate in all areas of responsibility in the next higher rank so they may be able to “fill-in” when necessary.
- Provide a training program either in-house or out-sourced that cover all areas of firefighting.
- Provide a work environment that allows for comfortable communication of needs or areas of self-concern, without the fear of criticism or other peer-related talk.
- Allow members to have an input into developing the department’s goals, both long-term and short-term goals, SOP’s, and other planning stakes within the department.
- A training division that is dedicated to providing consistent up-to-date training.
- I believe that a problem with our job is there are few senior privates to learn from.
- I believe a good way to educate officers is for the chiefs to delegate their duties to the officers and allow them to run some incidents to give them experience.
- A training division that meets National Fire Protection Association training requirements.

- Discipline is also very important. If a private is shown no discipline, then they know there will be no repercussions for certain actions. When they become promoted, this attitude follows them and their subordinates develop that attitude.

Discussion

This research project was conducted to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the CCFD can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district. The results of this research project did identify critical elements that can be used to develop such a succession plan. As this researcher completed this project, it became evident that the emphasis on developing fire department succession plans has increased over the last few years, however, the number of fire departments that have completed succession plans at this time appears to be minimal. On the other hand, succession plans in the private sector seem to be fairly prevalent, and certainly outnumbers the succession plans in the fire service, or for that matter, the public sector in general.

The research indicated that there were succession plan models available to implement an effective fire department succession plan. Within these models there were many useful critical elements that can be applied directly to the objective of CCFD to start developing a succession plan for the future leadership. The BDC (2005) identified steps of a succession plan based upon their own company's succession plan. Even though it is the banking industry, their following succession planning elements may be used in the fire service.

- Creating the ideal scenario for your departure from the company.
- Establishing the company's strategic vision.
- Examining the field of potential heirs, buyers and other successors.
- Determining who will coach the successor (BDC, 2005, p. 1)

The Wisconsin State Government (Wisconsin, 2005) identified what a succession plan does and why it is needed for continuity of their operations. The points that were made in their report are certainly applicable to the need and makeup of the CCFD's plan to make a succession plan.

- Ensures that employees are prepared and trained for the job and responsibilities of the future.
- Provides growth opportunities that help motivate and retain current employees. It shifts the idea from job progression to job expansion.
- Allows for the transfer of knowledge from key people in the organization to their successors using techniques such as mentoring and on-the-job training.
- Reduces stress on the new incumbent by making him/her better prepared to fill the role.
- Reduces workload of other team members who normally would have to pick up duties until the new incumbent is up-to-speed.
- Reduces the manager's time spent in assisting the new incumbent in becoming proficient.
- With the ever-changing workforce, succession plans are needed to survive in today's global environment. (Wisconsin, 2005, p. 1)

As one looks further into objectives and criteria for fire service succession plans, the research obtained from actual fire departments was very enlightening with regards to those critical elements already established by several departments around the country.

The KFD has identified the need for succession planning in their master community plan. The KFD (2004) has set succession planning as an important goal for their department to implement. Some of their key concerns regarding succession planning was to provide their

personnel with career planning and educational opportunities; to assist their staff in the preparation of career advancement; to prepare their staff for the future and to invest into their staff's development; developing a career roadmap for the department to raise the level of professionalism and enhance personal development through a defined process; and, through all of this they are confident that this will assist interested staff to develop the capabilities, knowledge and skills to effectively meet the demands of an Officer/Supervisor. As this researcher reflects on the core values identified here by the KFD, all of them would certainly be appropriate for the succession plan of the CCFD. It was also refreshing to see that the KFD had some very key strategic directions such as operational procedures that they will shall continue to develop to provide staff at all levels with the appropriate operational, administrative, and behavior guidance to succeed in the organization. This strategic planning concept is important and will certainly be taken into consideration in the recommendation to the CCFD for a succession plan.

The PFD (2005) has identified the need for succession planning in their strategic plan. This researcher believes that succession planning must be a critical element of a strategic plan because both complement each other when planning the future of a fire department. Also, in the PFD planning, common themes tend to show themselves once again:

For the Department to be the most successful, it must always be prepared to replace members within its rank structure. Good succession planning will help minimize this impact. (PFD, p. 16)

The following steps have been identified for succession planning:

- Refine recurring schedules for all promotional exams;
- Aggressively anticipate vacancies and attempt to always have a current list of eligible individuals available;

- Where possible, select replacements in advance of vacancies;
- Aggressively train personnel so that they are ready to assume positions when vacancies occur; and,
- Where possible, identify the maximum tenure of specialty assignments. (PFD, 2005, p. 16)

In his article, Deputy Chief Clack identified the importance of succession planning and how it fits the fire department's professional development plan. As part of this succession planning through the ranks, Clack outlines the strategy to prepare fire department personnel for future management positions and the retention of quality employees. The first strategy is training where the department is instituting credit-based firefighter training programs for both new and existing employees. The second strategy of the Minneapolis Fire Department is to institute competency based training for all officer positions in the department (Clack, 2002).

This researcher will forward these same values to the intent of the CCFD succession plan, just as Deputy Chief Clack has identified.

Of significant importance to this research was to identify the critical elements that should minimally exist in a succession plan in order to make it successful. The research revealed several such elements, all of which have been taken into consideration by this researcher for the final recommendation to the CCFD for inclusion in a succession plan. Several of the more important elements included:

In Reenie Kelleher's (2004) article leadership coaching and/or mentoring is the most effective approach to helping future leaders develop the most important skills according to her article. This certainly will be an important part of the CCFD plan.

Johnson (2004) discusses how succession planning may be difficult for an organization where transition often meets with resistance. The CCFD has been fortunate since change has

been fairly well accepted. Therefore, it will be necessary to embrace Johnson's emphasis of the need for candidates to embrace change and direct change. Johnson further reduces successful succession planning into four steps. These steps will provide guidance for the CCFD plan.

- 1) Identify existing competencies relating to leadership needs as well as to the needs of your department and the community it serves.
- 2) Evaluate members of your department and how they fit with the mission, vision and core values of your organization.
- 3) Implement coaching, mentoring, recruitment and training requirements that are consistent with the department's operational needs and its mission, vision and values.
- 4) Develop a plan. (Johnson, 2004, p. 137)

It will be as equally important to identify good successor candidates that are prepared to take on the challenges of the future. In his article, Morris-Lee (2001) identified the signs of a successor. He stressed that a successor must be a problem analyzer; a creative thinker; have the ability to exercise good judgement; have the drive to get things done; be resilient when dealing with a crises; have empathy for others; be a leader in bringing new possibilities to the organization; be a developer, moving things along until they become reality; be a good manager to direct the affairs of the organization; be speculative to determine sound new realities; be piloting for early application of new realities under controlled conditions; be testing so that fact-finding is second nature; be a mentor to teach and train; be a facilitator that empowers others to do their job; and be a supervisor promoting results through oversight and caretaking (Morris-Lee, 2001). Certainly the CCFD leadership needs to look at successors with these qualities.

When Zimmerman (2001) identified elements of a succession plan, several were critical to the success of a fire department succession plan. These included a good communications strategy; the identification of positions targeted for growth and attrition; identification of current

and future competencies; establish recruitment strategy and assessment / selection tools; institute formal coaching and mentoring; and establish a retention plan.

Hirsh (2000) also emphasized that succession planning has come a long way and requires some adaptations for an organization to implement such plans. Adaptations include:

- Strong emphasis on using succession planning as a process for pro-actively developing “talent”, and therefore an emphasis on engineering developmental work experiences.
- Planning for “pools” of jobs where possible, not just for individual posts.
- Acceptance of the need for a more diverse senior management group, with functional strength as well as general management skills.
- Consideration of future skill needs as well as current skills.
- More objective information on the performance, skills and potential of individuals.
- A collective management process for identifying successors and taking responsibility for their development. (Hirsh, 2000, p. 4)

This general philosophy identified by Hirsh should be considered critical to the CCFD succession plan.

Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002) identified steps that lead an organization through the design, development and implementation of a succession plan. The steps are an organization must identify its existing competencies; the organization must evaluate and assess current employees to determine how they match up to the organizational needs; the organization must introduce coaching, mentoring, training and recruiting methods that match the future needs of the organization; and the organization must develop the actual plan. The CCFD succession plan needs to utilize these steps as well to assure a successful outcome to their plan.

Of particular interest to this researcher is, the results of the survey given to the employees of the CCFD. The employees showed a genuine concern for their career development as well as a genuine interest in having a succession plan. The respondents emphasized professionalism and the need to be at the top of their game. This was evident in the survey results, such as:

- Establish a mentoring program where senior officers have subordinates assigned to them to assist in learning leadership roles.
- Provide on-going training for all personnel in officer level training. Many of our personnel are regularly put into situations that require them to act in the officer's role.
- Encourage involvement in professional trade organizations at all levels. Fire Marshals to become active in RIFMA, instructors in RIFIA, officers in RIAFC, NEIAFC....
- Encourage exposure to other departments and ways of doing things such as through attendance at trainings held regionally.
- Encourage those with special administrative talents to share and utilize those talents.
- Survey each department member regarding the areas that they personally feel that they need mentoring and/or education in so these needs may be met.
- Allow less experienced personnel take the lead, decision making roles in less critical incidents, with supervision, to allow them the experience and confidence to run an incident so that when they may be in that position on their own, they will be able to handle it.
- Allow members to have an input into developing the department's goals, both long-term and short-term goals, SOP's, and other planning stakes within the department.
- A training division that is dedicated to providing consistent up-to-date training.
- I believe a good way to educate officers is for the chiefs to delegate their duties to the officers and allow them to run some incidents to give them experience.

- A training division that meets National Fire Protection Association training requirements.

This researcher's interpretation of the results is that the fire service in general has come to understand the need for strategic planning and succession planning. The results would indicate that such planning has been prevalent in the private sector and less prevalent in the public sector. This is particularly true in the fire service where it appears that the whole process of strategic planning and succession planning is moving more towards the norm rather than the abnormal. Of most importance to this entire discussion, it is very evident that the research has identified very critical elements of a succession plan and that these critical elements may be used by the CCFD to ensure their plan has success when it is complete.

Finally, what are the implications of this research for the CCFD? It is apparent from the research that there is a need for succession planning and that the CCFD organization as a whole will benefit by implementing such a plan. The research has concluded that the critical elements of an effective succession plan for the CCFD can be identified, and have been identified through this research. Therefore, the information is now available for the current leadership of the CCFD to begin the development of a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district.

Recommendations

The problem, as stated previously, was that the CCFD does not have a succession plan to guide the future leadership of the fire district. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify the critical elements of a succession plan so that the current leadership of the CCFD can begin to develop a succession plan for the future leadership of the fire district.

The research project results identified some succession plan models as well as the critical elements of design that are used in these models.

The research project results also identified succession plans being utilized by other fire departments as well as the critical elements of design that are used by these agencies to make their programs successful.

In addition, the research project results identified critical elements of success for a succession plan that were important to the staff of the CCFD.

As a result of this research project, the researcher has compiled a list of critical elements for the design of a succession plan for the CCFD, so that the current leadership of the fire district may begin developing it. This list of critical elements is shown in Appendix B.

This researcher first recommends that the CCFD conduct a training session for its employees to discuss the implementation of a succession plan and its benefits to the organization as a whole.

This researcher also recommends that the CCFD leadership consider writing a strategic plan for the CCFD and implement it as well so that the succession plan and strategic plan will work in unison to develop a consistent direction for the future of the department.

The CCFD Board of Directors and leading officers will receive a copy of the data compiled in Appendix B for review, so that they understand the critical elements and overall guiding concepts of implementing a successful succession plan.

This researcher recommends that the information provided be used in its entirety by the CCFD leadership to develop a succession plan for the department, and that the development of such a plan start immediately so that the unfortunate pitfalls of not having such a plan never have to be experienced by the CCFD.

It is further recommended that the CCFD consider a more in-depth survey of fire departments in our region to determine the type of succession plans and strategic plans being utilized. The results of such a survey may identify more critical elements of a succession plan as well as enhance the importance of developing a strategic plan as well. Such results may be added

to the data identified in Appendix B and the CCFD succession plan may be appropriately updated using the new information.

For future readers, the list of critical elements of a succession plan as outlined in Appendix B could be utilized by other fire service organizations in their work to develop succession plans. However, this researcher recommends that any interested fire service conduct a review of the succession plans and strategic plans of surrounding communities. The information from these other communities along with the information in Appendix B should form the foundation of the beginning development of a successful succession plan.

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Appendix A

Fire Department Succession Planning Survey

Instructions to Complete The Survey:

- 1) Please read the two definitions of Succession Planning that follow these directions.
- 2) Considering the definition and explanation of Succession Planning, please list six (6) ideas that you feel would be important for our fire department to implement in order to provide for a successful Succession Plan for the future of our department.
- 3) Please list your six ideas on page two (2) of this survey.

Definition of Succession Planning:

Succession planning establishes a process that recruits employees, develops their skills and abilities, and prepares them for advancement, all while retaining them to ensure a return on the organization's training investment. Succession planning involves:

- Understanding the organization's long-term goals and objectives
- Identifying the workforce's developmental needs
- Determining workforce trends and predictions

In the past, succession planning typically targeted only key leadership positions. In today's organizations, it is important to include key positions in a variety of job categories.

With good succession planning, employees are ready for new leadership roles as the need arises, and when someone leaves, a current employee is ready to step up to the plate. In addition, succession planning can help develop a diverse workforce, by enabling decision makers to look at the future make-up of the organization as a whole.

Definition of Succession Planning is also defined as:

Succession Planning is the process of identifying and preparing suitable personnels, through [mentoring](#) and [training](#), to replace key players (such as the [CEO](#)) within an organization as their terms expire.

Mentoring refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced **mentor** and a less experienced partner referred to as a **mentee** or **protégé**. Usually - but not necessarily - the mentor/protégé pair will be of the same sex.

Training refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge and relates to specific useful skills. Today it is often referred to as [professional development](#).

Thank you for completing this survey!!!

Fire Department Succession Planning Survey

Instructions:

1) Please read the two definitions of Succession Planning that follow these directions.

2) Considering the definition and explanation of Succession Planning, please list six (6) ideas that you feel would be important for our fire department to implement in order to provide for a successful Succession Plan for the future of our department.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Page 2

Thank you for completing this survey!!!

Please return to Chief Robert W. Seltzer, Fax # 392-9001.

Appendix B

Recommendation to the Management of the Central Coventry FD:**THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION PLAN
FOR THE CENTRAL COVENTRY FIRE DISTRICT**

- *Critical elements that should be part of a Succession Plan.*
 - *Action items for accomplishing the Critical Elements.*
- *Considerations while Developing and Implementing a Succession Plan.*
 - *Attributes of the Succession Plan.*

BY: Robert W. Seltzer, Chief
Central Coventry Fire District
Coventry, Rhode Island

This recommendation is the result of an applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program.

March 2006

Critical Elements that should be part of a Succession Plan:

1. Identify existing competencies relating to leadership needs as well as to the needs of your department and the community it serves.
2. Evaluate members of your department and how they fit with the mission, vision and core values of your organization.
3. Implement coaching, mentoring, recruitment and training requirements that are consistent with the department's operational needs and its mission, vision and values.
4. Develop a plan.
5. Establish the scope of the succession plan by reviewing the organization's strategic plan.
6. Create a succession plan that meets your workforce strategies.
7. Implement the succession plan through appropriate tactics and strategies.
8. Monitor, evaluate and revise the succession plan through lessons learned.
9. A commitment by the Board of Directors and senior managers, and alignment with organizational strategy.
10. Identify competency models that provide a blueprint for high-performers now.
11. A functioning performance management system that measures individuals against the competency models.
12. Assessment methods that measure how well-prepared individuals are to assume additional, or specialized, responsibility.
13. An individual development planning process that helps to narrow the present gap between current competencies and current performance and the future gap between future competencies needed and potential.

14. A measurement method that assesses how well the succession program is functioning over time.
15. Workforce analysis and forecasting
16. Communications strategy
17. Identify positions targeted for growth and attrition
18. Identify current and future competencies
19. Identify and assess high potential employees
20. Do a complete gap analysis to determine the existence or extent of a gap in the competencies for each position.
21. Select training and development activities to close the gaps in competencies.
22. Establish recruitment strategy and assessment / selection tools
23. Institute formal coaching and mentoring (training and development)
24. Establish a retention plan
25. Have an evaluation and measurement tool in place to measure success.

Action Items for accomplishing the Critical Elements of a Succession Plan:

1. Conduct management training focused on augmenting their skills and knowledge necessary to develop the talent of their people reporting to them.
2. Implement development strategies and tactics that will communicate the succession plan to all employees.
3. Monitor and evaluate the succession plan so that it may be revised as needed to ensure its success.
4. Strong emphasis on using succession planning as a process for pro-actively developing “talent”, and therefore an emphasis on engineering developmental work experiences.
5. Planning for “pools” of jobs where possible, not just for individual posts.

6. Acceptance of the need for a more diverse senior management group, with functional strength as well as general management skills.
7. Consideration of future skill needs as well as current skills.
8. Identify steps that lead an organization through the design, development and implementation of a succession plan. The steps are an organization must identify its existing competencies; the organization must evaluate and assess current employees to determine how they match up to the organizational needs; the organization must introduce coaching, mentoring, training and recruiting methods that match the future needs of the organization; and the organization must develop the actual plan.
9. Officer/supervisor Development and Leadership opportunities should be established to assist staff in their quest for advancement. Program(s) will cover a wide range of topics including leadership and management practices, Incident Command and Operational best practices, and self directed components.
10. Opportunities should be provided for staff to be temporarily assigned to other divisions within the Department.
11. Operational Procedures should continue to be developed to provide staff at all levels with the appropriate operational, administrative, and behavior guidance.
12. Drill based performance measurement scenarios should be developed to assist staff in development of individual, crew, and platoon capabilities and will provide a mechanism of evaluation of individual and team abilities.
13. Survey each department member regarding the areas that they personally feel that they need mentoring and/or education in so these needs may be met.
14. Provide on-going training for all personnel in officer level training. Many of our personnel are regularly put into situations that require them to act in the officer's role.

Considerations while Developing and implementing a Succession Plan:

- a. A successor must be a problem analyzer; a creative thinker; have the ability to exercise good judgement; have the drive to get things done; be resilient when dealing with a crises; have empathy for others; be a leader in bringing new possibilities to the organization; be a developer, moving things along until they become reality; be a good manger to direct the affairs of the organization; be speculative to determine sound new realities; be piloting for early application of new realities under controlled conditions; be testing so that fact-finding is second nature; be a mentor to teach and train; be a facilitator that empowers others to do their job; and be a supervisor promoting results through oversight and caretaking .

This can be accomplished by:

- i. Building the successor's business and leadership skills
 - ii. Planning the development and retention of key persons
 - iii. Creating an effective association structure
 - iv. Developing management systems for peak association performance
 - v. Documenting systems and procedures to create efficiencies and support the effective transfer of knowledge
 - vi. Implementing a proper strategic planning process that includes leadership transition
 - vii. Hiring and training the best possible staff
- Career profiling tools – capture the skills and experiences of the workforce, and create an online resume of sorts, which allow managers to search individual skill profiles to fill critical workforce openings. Information to track includes:

- Education
 - Licenses
 - Certifications
 - Awards
 - Previous roles or experiences
 - Additional training, skills, or positions.
- Team building tools – provide cost-effective identification of project team candidates, allowing you to efficiently leverage the disparate skill sets of your workforce. Team building tools include:
 - Skills
 - Functional requirements
 - Roles
 - Previous positions
 - Licenses
 - Education.
- Talent management plans – allow organizations to closely manage their workforce to quickly identify high-potential employees and their skills. Talent management planning tools should:
 - Identify department and people priorities
 - Map employees on a graphical grid in order to see varying degrees of performance and potential
 - Provide a view of the current organizational structure, as well as plan the future organizational structure
 - Identify future open positions based on the future organizational structure

- Generate talent management plans and succession plans based on employee competency assessments as well as career profiles.
- Establish a mentoring program where senior officers have subordinates assigned to them to assist in learning leadership roles.
- Encourage involvement in professional trade organizations at all levels. Fire Marshals to become active in RIFMA, instructors in RIFIA, officers in RIAFC, NEIAFC....
- Encourage exposure to other departments and ways of doing things such as through attendance at trainings held regionally.
- Encourage those with special administrative talents to share and utilize those talents.
- Allow less experienced personnel take the lead, decision making roles in less critical incidents, with supervision, to allow them the experience and confidence to run an incident so that when they may be in that position on their own, they will be able to handle it.
- A training division that meets National Fire Protection Association training requirements.

Attributes of the Succession Plan:

- Provide a work environment that allows for comfortable communication of needs or areas of self-concern, without the fear of criticism or other peer-related talk
- Allows members to have an input into developing the department's goals, both long-term and short-term goals, SOP's, and other planning stakes within the department.
- Discipline.